

PLANNING INSPECTORATE
APPEAL UNDER SECTION 78 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF PAT PHELAN

Racehorse Trainer and Stud Manager
HORSE RACING, RACEHORSE TRAINING AND EQUESTRIAN OPERATIONS

Appeal Reference: APP/P3610/W/26/6006971

LPA Reference: 25/00846/OUT

Farm View, Langley Vale Road, Epsom, Surrey KT18 6AP

20th August 2026

1. Introduction and Scope

1.1 My name is Pat Phelan. I am a racehorse trainer and stud manager with extensive practical experience of thoroughbred horses, stud management and racehorse training. I have been involved with the Epsom racehorse training operation since coming to Ermyn Lodge in 2006 and have developed detailed practical knowledge of the Epsom Training Grounds and the movement of horses between training yards and the Downs.

1.2 My evidence is based on that practical experience. I am not giving evidence as a highways engineer. I understand that the Council has withdrawn its fourth reason for refusal relating to horses and that Surrey County Council does not maintain an objection on conventional highway-safety grounds. My concern is different: the practical and operational effect of a substantial new residential development on established routes used by thoroughbred racehorses.

2. Importance of the Epsom Training Environment

2.1 Epsom Downs Racecourse and the associated Training Grounds form an important and unusual concentration of racing and racehorse-training activity. The February 2026 Council/Jockey Club Statement of Common Ground records that the racecourse and Training Grounds are of national significance and that Epsom is one of only two locations in the United Kingdom where a racecourse and racehorse training coexist.

2.2 The Training Grounds comprise approximately 250 acres and serve around 10 trainers. The Economic Impact Report records a monthly average of 135 horses in training in 2024 and estimates the Training Grounds themselves generate approximately £2.912 million of economic impact each year. The wider commercial impact associated with Epsom Downs Racecourse is estimated at approximately £56.18 million per annum.

2.3 In practical terms the Training Grounds cannot be separated from the yards where horses are stabled or the routes by which they travel between the two. The emerging Local Plan identifies these routes as Racehorse Movement Corridors and recognises their operational importance.

3. Bridleway 127

3.1 Bridleway 127 is particularly important to my evidence. The Epsom & Walton Training Grounds Management Board identified it as a vital link for trainers travelling to and from the Training Grounds. Horses from Ermyn Lodge use Bridleway 127 to reach the main gallops.

3.2 From my experience, the Training Grounds are essential to getting our horses fit for racing. We do four lots per day, with the first lot at about 7.15 am and the second at about 8.30 am. Strings can vary between two and six horses depending on rider availability. Bridleway 127 is our safest and most direct route to the gallops.

3.3 The most sensitive point on our route is the junction between the horse margin and Bridleway 127. Safe and predictable access to the gallops is fundamental to the training operation.

4. Characteristics of Thoroughbred Racehorses

4.1 Fit thoroughbred racehorses are sensitive animals. They can react to noise, sudden movements, lorries, trucks, bicycles and unfamiliar activity differently from ordinary recreational or riding-school horses. If frightened and loose they can be a danger to themselves and the public.

4.2 Racehorses also benefit from routine. In my experience, repeated disturbance or stress associated with a changing training environment, including construction activity, can affect their preparation and performance.

5. Effect of the Appeal Development

5.1 The appeal proposal is for up to 110 dwellings. Once occupied, it would introduce additional residents, vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, dog walkers and recreational activity into the immediate locality. I do not suggest that every additional user creates an unacceptable situation or that racehorses should have exclusive use of public routes. My concern is the cumulative change to an established operational environment.

5.2 In particular, I am concerned about increased encounters between racehorse strings and other route users; increased cycling and recreational use of Bridleway 127; more dog walking; additional vehicle movements during the periods when horses travel to and from the Training Grounds; and unfamiliar users who may not understand how best to approach or pass a string of thoroughbred racehorses.

5.3 Historic collision records do not, in my view, answer that concern. I accept that no equestrian casualties were recorded in the periods analysed and that SCC does not object on conventional highway-safety grounds. The issue is whether the proposed development would materially change the practical conditions in which established racehorse movement routes operate.

6. Consequences for Training and Mitigation

6.1 The training industry depends on a functioning network of yards, Training Grounds and access routes. Difficulties in moving horses between yards and the gallops would affect daily training operations. Horses need to cool down after vigorous exercise and, in my experience, returning through a building-site environment could cause stress and affect performance.

6.2 If a group of stables experiences below-par performance, horses may be moved to other training areas. I do not suggest this development alone would necessarily cause the Training Grounds to cease operating, but development which makes racehorse movements materially more difficult or less predictable adds pressure to the viability of the Epsom training system.

6.3 I have considered possible mitigation. While some measures may assist during construction, I do not consider the suggested measures adequately address the needs of the training community. In my view, trainers require a secure route to and from the gallops and protection from construction activity during the principal morning training period, approximately 6.00 am to 12 noon.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Epsom Downs Racecourse and the Training Grounds form a nationally significant racing and training environment. Their operation depends not only on the Downs themselves but on the training yards, specialist infrastructure and established access routes.

7.2 Bridleway 127 is an important part of that operational network. The appeal development would introduce a material change in the level and nature of activity immediately adjoining established racehorse movement routes.

7.3 Based on my practical experience, I consider that daily interaction with a building site and the longer-term increase in residential and traffic activity would put additional pressure on the safe and effective movement of racehorses from Ermyn Lodge and could jeopardise the viability of training racehorses from that yard.

7.4 I therefore ask the Inspector to take the effect on the established racehorse-training operation into account when assessing the overall merits of the appeal.

Pat Phelan

Racehorse Trainer and Stud Manager